



Steps Hotels Can Take to Serve Blind and Low Vision Guests

By: Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D.

Hotel managers and staff can take many proactive steps to make sure blind and low vision guests feel welcome, independent, and safe throughout their stay. These steps go beyond minimum compliance and focus on dignity, usability, and excellent customer service.

Travel should be enjoyable, seamless, and accessible for all. Yet for guests who are blind or have low vision, hotel stays often present unnecessary barriers. From difficulty reading menus to challenges navigating unfamiliar spaces, these guests frequently encounter frustrations that compromise their independence, comfort, and safety.

Hotels that take proactive steps to improve accessibility not only comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act but also demonstrate genuine hospitality. By making thoughtful design choices, providing accessible information, and training staff, hotels can create a more inclusive experience that benefits everyone.

Below are practical steps hotel managers and staff can take to better serve blind and low vision guests, organized around the stages of a typical stay.



Arrival and Check-In

- Accessible transportation coordination - airport shuttles, taxis, or rideshares that accommodate people who use wheelchairs and guide dogs.
- Training staff to provide clear, respectful, and descriptive assistance (e.g., assisting during the check-in process, offering to guide a guest by



CHECK-IN PROCESS, OFFERING TO GUIDE A GUEST BY ASKING THE GUEST TO TAKE THEIR ARM AND WALKING IN FRONT OF THE PERSON, DESCRIBING THE LOBBY LAYOUT, LOCATION OF THE ELEVATORS, RESTAURANT, GUEST ROOM, AND FITNESS CENTER).

- Large-print and braille registration materials are available at the front desk.
- Digital check-in options that are screen-reader compatible.

Wayfinding and Navigation

- Tactile signage in braille and raised lettering for all rooms, elevators, exits, restrooms, and amenities.
- Consistent room numbering and logical layouts to reduce disorientation.
- High-contrast signage and décor to aid guests with limited vision.
- Orientation tour - staff can walk blind guests through the guest room and the property to build familiarity.
- Mobile navigation support - some hotels and people who are blind or have low vision use apps such as Be My Eyes, Aira, GoodMaps, and BlindSquare, which integrate with GPS and indoor wayfinding beacons.

Guest Rooms

- Accessible controls - light switches, thermostats, and outlets should be consistently located and easy to reach.
- Large-print, braille, or accessible digital versions of room guides, menus, and TV channel lists.
- Voice-activated technology - smart speakers to control lighting, temperature, curtains, and TV.
- Good lighting - adjustable lamps with high-contrast switches to help guests with partial vision.
- Clear floor space - avoid low furniture or trip hazards.
- Door hanger Do Not Disturb signs are available in braille or tactile format.
- Vibrating alarm clocks are available for low vision or deaf-blind guests.

Restaurants and Dining

- Braille and large-print menus or accessible digital menus compatible with screen readers.
- Staff training to read menus aloud and describe food options clearly when needed.
- Good lighting at tables to support guests with low vision.

Safety

- At check-in, explain the emergency evacuation plan to the guest. (e.g., stay in your guest room, meet at a designated area, proceed to the hallway and follow the other guests out of the hotel).
- Emergency evacuation training for staff to assist blind guests quickly and safely.
- Guest rooms on the first floor can facilitate both evacuation and orientation for some guests, speeding up their exit from the hotel.
- Audible alerts for fire alarms.



Conclusion

ACCESSIBILITY FOR BLIND AND LOW VISION GUESTS REQUIRES A MIX OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN, ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION FORMATS, STAFF TRAINING, AND TECHNOLOGY.

Hotels that excel in this area ensure compliance with regulations like the Americans with Disabilities Act and build loyalty among guests who recognize genuine inclusive hospitality.

Resources

American Council of the Blind: <https://www.acb.org/home>
Blind & Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County: <https://www.blindandlowvision.org/about/etiquette/>
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired: <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6472/DARS--Etiquette-Guide-Working-with-Visually-Impaired-Hand-out-PDF>
Be My Eyes: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/>
Aira: <https://aira.io/>
GoodMaps: <https://goodmaps.com/>
BlindSquare: <https://www.blindsquare.com/>

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About the Columnist

Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D., is an internationally recognized accessibility consultant, speaker, author, and CEO of Rossetti Enterprises LLC. She speaks to and consults with hotels and lodging venues to ensure their environments and services are fully accessible.

Paralyzed from the waist down after a spinal cord injury, she speaks from her wheelchair, *combining personal experience with professional expertise to advocate for accessible and universal design across the U.S. and beyond.*

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